



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
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October 6, 2004

TO: Washington State Board of Health Members
FROM: Tom Locke, WSBOH Chair
RE: ZOOBOTIC DISEASES AND EXOTIC PETS

Summary

I am submitting the attached report titled "Zoonotic Diseases and Exotic Pets: A Public Policy Analysis" for the Board's consideration.

Recent events such as the introduction of monkeypox to the United States raised awareness of the threat of zoonotic diseases and drew attention to the potential role of pet animals in disease transmission. Laws governing the sale, transportation, and possession of exotic pets are a patchwork of local, state, and federal regulations. Questions have arisen in light of recent events regarding the extent of public health's authority to act in the event of an emerging zoonotic disease.

To address these questions and develop recommendations, representatives from local public health, the State Department of Health (DOH), and the State Board of Health (SBOH) formed a work group comprised of experts in veterinary medicine, environmental health, policy development, and public health administration. The group collaborated to determine what, if any, additional public health authorities and actions are necessary to protect the public from emerging zoonotic diseases. The process involved 1) a review of existing laws and regulations; 2) creating and distributing a survey to local health jurisdictions and animal control agencies; 3) examining epidemiological data on the occurrence of zoonotic diseases; 4) consulting interested parties; and 5) reviewing relevant background documents. The work group considered a range of possibilities including creating new regulations, clarifying existing authorities and regulations, and expanding non-regulatory activities.

The attached report contains four recommendations for SBOH and/or DOH.

- 1) Develop a zoonotic disease response plan;
- 2) Revise existing rules on rabies and psittacosis;
- 3) Give further consideration to adopting a written point of sale education requirement for all reptile sales; and
- 4) Monitor the situation and periodically reevaluate whether additional regulation is needed.

I have invited Dr. Sharon Hopkins from Public Health Seattle & King County, Maryanne Guichard, and Dr. Mira Leslie from the Department of Health to join me today in presenting a draft of the report and the work group's recommendations to the Board. We invite your questions on this compelling topic and look forward to receiving your comments.

Board action recommended

Upon reviewing the contents of the report and considering the recommendations from the work group the Board may choose to consider, amend if necessary, and adopt the following motion:

The Board accepts the draft report titled "Zoonotic Diseases and Exotic Pets: A Public Health Policy Analysis" and the recommendations of the work group. The Board directs the staff to revise the draft as necessary and appropriate. At the end of the process, the Chair is authorized by the Board to approve a final draft.